



# Positive Parenting

working together <sup>to</sup> support families  
in Milton Keynes

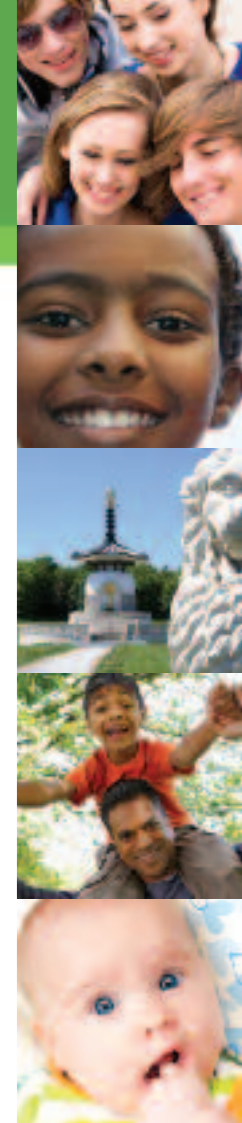
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/surestart](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/surestart)

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# Welcome

**Welcome to Positive Parenting, a handbook that has been produced by Sure Start Children's Centres in Milton Keynes.**

Your job as a parent can be both challenging and rewarding. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead and children certainly do not come with instructions! Every family experiences difficulties from time to time. When these extra pressures come along, it can make the job of being a parent even harder.

At these times it can be hard to know what help or information you need and to where to get it. When things are tough, and they usually are at some point, it does not mean that you have somehow failed as a parent - things happen to everyone. It is often the way difficulties are handled that can make a difference to your children, both now and in the future.

This handbook offers some ideas to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It gives you contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with issues. The handbook also offers helpful tips from professionals and things to look out for. We hope you find the information useful. Please pass on any feedback to your local Children's Centre.

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# A guide to services

Here in Milton Keynes we have a wide range of professionals. See right for which professional is best to help you.



## Children's Centres

Children's centres in Milton Keynes provide a variety of advice and support for families.

Our services are available to you from pregnancy right through to when your child goes into reception class at primary school.

Drop in to your local centre and see what's available to you.



## School

Teachers develop skills, not only around the curriculum but also social skills to help our children develop and progress. Our teachers challenge and inspire pupils to help them deepen their knowledge and understanding of the world around. It is often a teacher who a parent may first contact if they are worried.



## Support worker

Support workers work in various services in Milton Keynes. They offer help and support to families. They might visit you at home or talk to you on the phone and help with practical and emotional issues. They provide information and advice to help with everyday life and can signpost you to other support.



## Family Information Service

FIS provides free, up to date information about services for children and young people in Milton Keynes, including for parents and carers of children with disabilities. It can also give you information about childcare provision, employment rights and local holiday activities for families.



## Health Centre

You will need to register with a local Doctor. Your Doctor can advise, give you the medicines you need and point you in the right direction if you need other specialist services. You will need to make an appointment but most Doctors will see a baby quite quickly if you are worried. After 6pm most services are covered by an Emergency Doctor Service.



# A positive start

## Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about bringing out the best in your child. Listen and try to understand their point of view, encourage their efforts and you will really start to form the basis of a good relationship. They will always be your child but allowing them to develop, grow and establish their independence will give them the confidence they need.

In trying to help, it may appear that you are nagging. Learning from their mistakes, where it is safe to do so, is a good thing. It can be easy to point out where you think things are going wrong and forget to notice the things that go right. Everyone enjoys a bit of praise and encouragement, so when they do well, tell them.

Children gradually learn to make their own decisions, which may not always fit with yours. That is why tension is normal. Choose your battles and let some go! You might find that their friends seem to take priority as they get older. This is normal but you might feel jealous and even feel a bit left out.



### Stop

They seem unhappy, have mood changes, are unusually secretive and are avoiding you.



### Think

Could you be doing what you think is right without listening to how they feel?



### Do

Try to develop an open relationship. Be supportive and let them know you are always there to listen.



## Growing & developing

A sense of self-esteem and being aware of dangers is the best protection you can give your child. Let them know you're around to talk about puberty and changes in their body, sexual health and relationships. Let them know that you will always be there as a support through growing up, at exam times and on into adulthood.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



# New to Milton Keynes



## A whole new start

If you are new to Milton Keynes things will of course seem a bit strange at first but with our help we can work together to support you. Health workers, teachers and carers can offer a whole host of services to welcome you.

To get the best start, make sure you register with a local doctor, health visitor and dentist and find out about schools. Milton Keynes School Admissions Service will be able to help you. If you have a pre-school child, your nearest Children's Centre may be able to help get in touch with other services to help you. Going to clubs or local activities will help your child make new friends and begin a new enjoyable learning experience. Young people find it easier to make friends if they have something in common.

Try to make new friends yourself, it's not always easy, but once you've made the effort you will be pleased you did. Join local clubs or learn a new skill - this way you will immediately have something in common with everyone else.



### Stop

You are new to the area and feel alone. You do not know anyone.



### Think

Do not shut others out - enjoy meeting new people and seeing new places.



### Do

Find out about local clubs, schools and Children's Centres. Try to chat to one new person everyday.

You may even wish to become a volunteer, which is a great way to get to know people and add to your work experience. Don't be afraid to ask for help if there's anything you don't understand. Caring professionals will aim to understand your cultural preferences and overcome any language barriers, to help make you feel confident and settled as soon as possible. Remember you are not alone - there is a network of support for you out there.

Families Information Service  
0800 035 0335  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare)

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



# All kinds of parents

## Your family is unique

There's no such thing as an 'average' family - every family is different. Growing up with one parent can be a good thing, leading to a close relationship. Encourage your child to spend time with their other parent if it's safe and possible. Help them to understand that it's okay to love you both.

Young parents may face extra challenges. Don't be embarrassed to ask for support and advice. Your education may have to be cut short, but don't give up on plans for the future. Make sure that you have good, reliable childcare.

In a new relationship, everyone needs time to get used to things. Change can make us all feel unsafe, so it's important to make sure everyone feels secure. Take things slowly and carefully.

Grandparents can help out and are an important link to family history and a sense of belonging. Their experience can be useful. They have lives of their own so don't ask them to do too much. In family break downs they may lose touch.



### Stop

We are separating and my son will be living with me.



### Think

Is he feeling insecure? Have you neglected his feelings?



### Do

A stable family life is important to children. Remind him that you both still love him.



## We are all equal

Diversity is all about differences. We are all different - physically, socially, culturally and sexually. You may have a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a disability. But not everyone values and respects the differences in society. Discrimination is when you are treated differently just because of who you are. Although we're all different we all have the right to equal respect, opportunity and justice.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

In Milton Keynes if you feel that your child needs extra support, a CAF is the way to work out how to get the support. With your agreement, a professional like your child's health visitor or teacher will talk to you and your child to find out what is going well and what support might help to improve things. The CAF form is filled in with this information and professionals who could help you are involved too. By working together with you, this can help your child receive the right support at an early stage, before a small need grows into a bigger one.

# Safeguarding

## Do you have concerns?

When we suspect, witness or are told that a child or young person has been harmed we can react in many different ways. We may feel guilt, anger, disbelief or denial. Some of these reactions can prevent help getting to a family who need it.

Many people do not report their concerns because they may:

- Fear that the child or young person will be at further risk of harm.
- Believe that nothing will be done.
- Believe that the child or young person will be taken away from their family.
- Worry that the family may find out who reported them.
- Ruin family relationships.

However there may be times when a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. It is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Don't think 'What if I'm wrong?' - think 'What if I'm right?'



### Stop

It is important children know what to do when they feel unsafe. Do they know who to talk to?



### Think

Protecting children is everybody's business. Adults have a responsibility to report abuse.



### Do

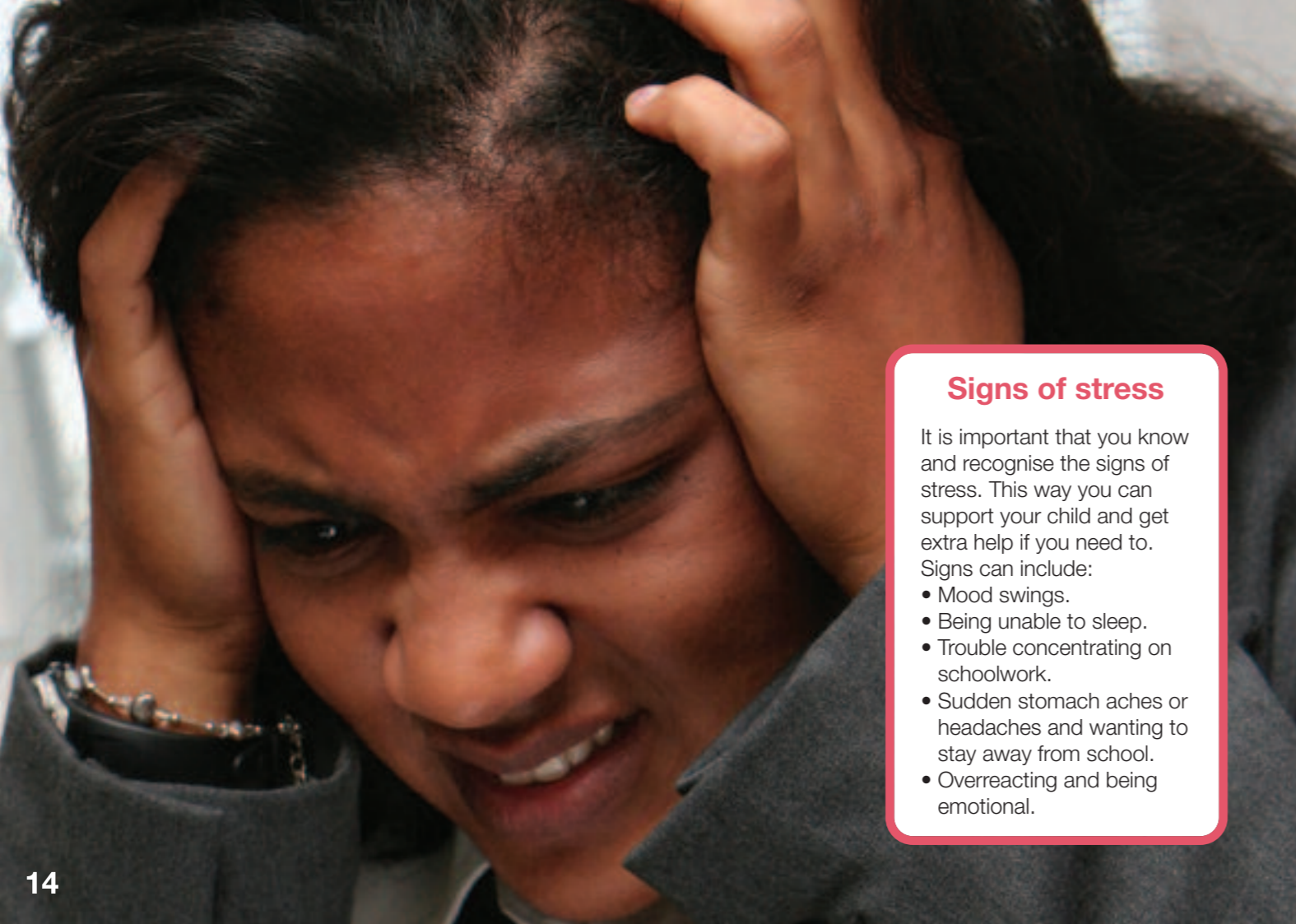
If you are worried about your own or someone else's child, find out what support is available.



## Support worker says

If you think that a child has been hurt, contact the duty social worker or the police. If you are unsure, you can speak to a helpline such as the NSPCC and your call will be kept private. If you have fears that a child is being hurt right now, the police should be called first, as they have the powers to intervene immediately.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to. Signs can include:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.

# Coping with stress

## Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, exam pressure and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you don't think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children and young people feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. This might mean wearing certain clothes or shopping in the right places. On a more serious level, this might mean being absent from school, trying alcohol or drugs, shoplifting or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.



### Stop

Your child seems stressed out.



### Think

Are they under lots of pressure with school work and exams?



### Do

Try to break down their workload into small easy to manage amounts. Talk to their Teacher.



## Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they're upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### Education

Depending upon the disability or Special Educational Need that your child has, they may need additional support in their mainstream school. In some circumstances your child may need to attend a special school - a specialist environment designed to match their educational needs. Every school has a Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) who can discuss any issues with you. You can also contact Parent Partnership on 01908 254518 for impartial information.

# Children with disabilities

## Make sure that they get the best support available

If your child has a disability the future can feel like a real challenge, but you are not alone. You can't stop your child's condition, but you can help with the disability they experience by making sure that they get the best support available. Milton Keynes Inclusion Service provides a range of support.

Your Doctor and Health Authority provide the help you need to understand your child's disability and help you plan treatment, therapy, equipment and ongoing care. The Milton Keynes Inclusion Service helps parents of disabled children under five to be at the heart of decision making and planning. This includes access to keyworker services and other resources.

Your child is especially protected by Law. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for any service provider like schools to treat disabled people differently because of their disability. We support equal rights.

### Benefits

Benefits that you could receive to help you include Disability Living Allowance, Carer's Allowance, help with extra housing costs, Carers Blue Badge Scheme, free dental treatment and prescriptions and help with the cost of glasses. In some cases travel to hospital, school meals and road tax exemption. There are organisations and charities who provide further help, advice and support.



### Stop

You think your child may have some form of disability.



### Think

Some children do not appear to have a disability at birth, it can develop over time. Do not panic.



### Do

Contact your health visitor, doctor, local Children's Centre or school to access support through a CAF.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.





### How domestic abuse affects children

Children are affected in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, bedwet, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset.

**Long-term effects:** The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away. Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.

# Domestic abuse

## You are not alone

Domestic abuse is a crime. It affects many families across Milton Keynes. Women (often pregnant) and children are those mostly affected by domestic abuse, usually when drugs or alcohol are involved.

Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they don't. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life. Offer them a positive role model so that they learn other ways of behaving.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and money worries can make it difficult for women with children to leave and some may want to stay put and get their abuser to leave. It is your responsibility to protect your child and remove them from harm. You can seek help from a range of specialist services in Milton Keynes. You can also report incidents to the Police.



### Stop

Any violence or abuse between adults at home will negatively affect children.



### Think

Take responsibility by seeking help to stop or make it stop.



### Do

In an emergency, call 999. Get support and help now. The longer it lasts, the more damaging it becomes.



## What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can be physical, sexual or verbal. It can also include things such as the constant breaking of trust, psychological games, harassment and financial control.

### What do I do now?

If you want to leave an abusive relationship and are worried about safety, you do not have to suffer alone. There is support out there.

There are three important steps you must take:

- Recognise that it is happening.
- Accept you are not to blame.
- Get help and support.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Some Children's Centres and schools in Milton Keynes offer parenting programmes. They are for any parent who wants to be supported in improving their skills. It gives you the chance to chat and exchange ideas with other parents as well as meeting professionals, who can help and offer advice.

# Parenting roles & responsibilities

## It's your job

Being a parent can be one of the most amazing things we can do in our lives and it can also be one of our biggest challenges. Your child will rely on you in many ways and you are responsible for their safety, health, care and actions.

As they grow from toddler into child they will develop their own circle of friends. You will notice their independence and interest in the outside world and slowly they will become more independent.

If you are a parent then you are responsible in the eyes of the law for the safety, well-being and upbringing of your child. Your children are a reflection of you and your parenting.

The most effective parenting tool we have is the example we set as good role models early on. This will help your child grow into a responsible, healthy and happy adult.



### Stop

Having a child means a lifelong commitment to someone who will need your care and support.



### Think

The responsibility that comes with being a parent can be daunting at times.



### Do

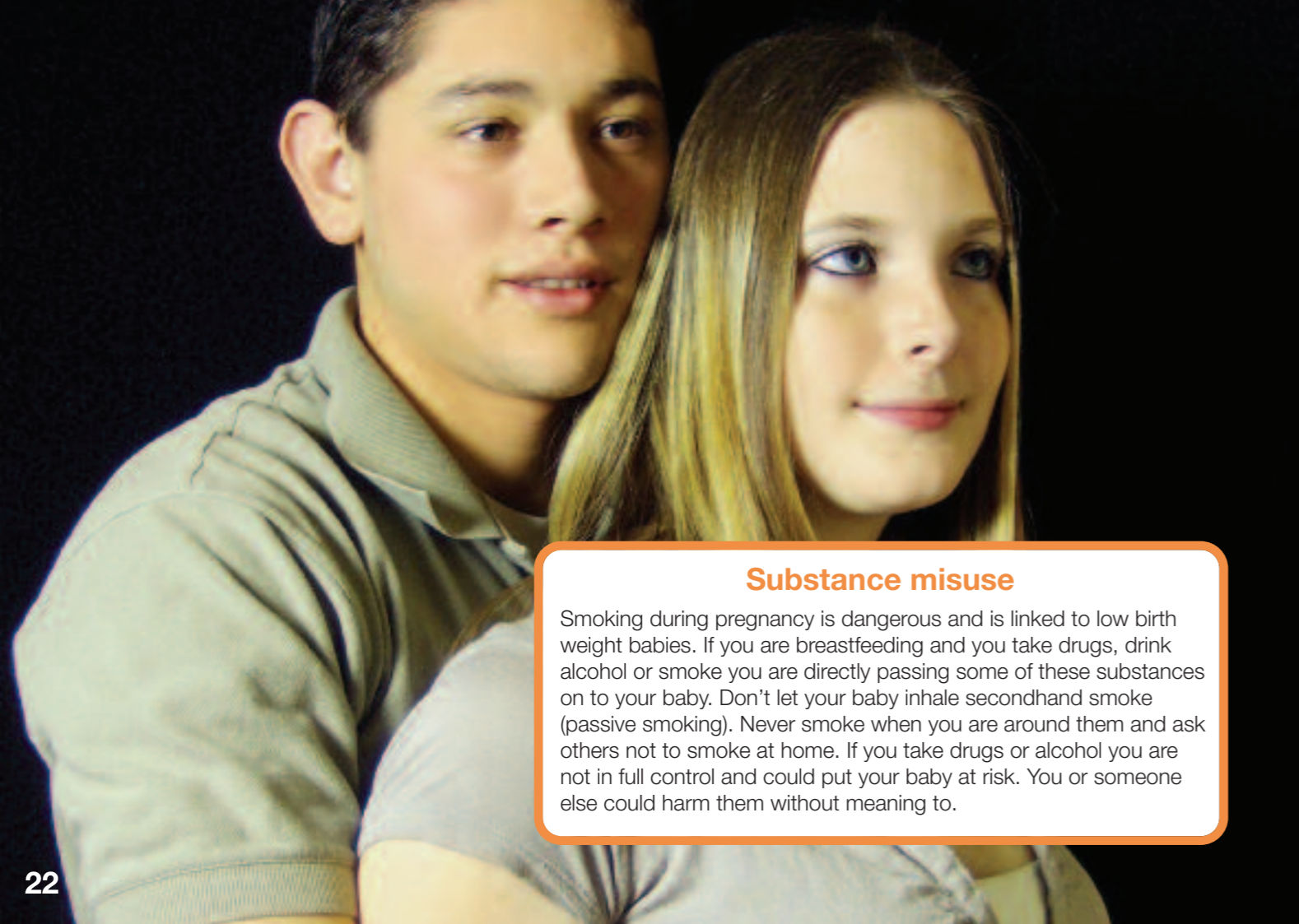
The most effective parenting tool we have is the example we set as good role models early on.



## Support worker says

You are responsible for their actions as well as for keeping them safe and well. You are also responsible legally for making sure they go to school every day. Support them and take an interest in their day and go to the school open evenings and events.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### Substance misuse

Smoking during pregnancy is dangerous and is linked to low birth weight babies. If you are breastfeeding and you take drugs, drink alcohol or smoke you are directly passing some of these substances on to your baby. Don't let your baby inhale secondhand smoke (passive smoking). Never smoke when you are around them and ask others not to smoke at home. If you take drugs or alcohol you are not in full control and could put your baby at risk. You or someone else could harm them without meaning to.

# Young parents

## Getting the support you need

Just because you are young it doesn't mean you won't be just as good a parent as anyone else. However, when you are still trying to sort out your future, it can make things that bit more daunting.

There is lots of support out there for young parents. Coming to terms with what's happening, finding out about help, understanding your rights about education and employment and finding support can all help you cope.

It's different for everyone, but being a young parent might put a strain on your relationship with your partner, your family and even your friends. There may also be money worries so find out what benefits you may be entitled to.

You might want to go back into education, training or work. Revisit some of the plans and dreams you had before you had your baby as your plans could still happen. Ask about local support groups at your nearest Children's Centre and try to meet other young parents.



### Stop

Are you finding it hard to cope? Do you feel tearful? Are you having difficulty looking after your baby?



### Think

You need to learn to look after your baby. Ensure you are eating well and sleep while the baby sleeps.



### Do

The more support you have during pregnancy, the more likely you will be able to cope once the baby is born.



## Looking after yourself

Having a baby can be exhausting and stressful. Boost your energy levels by eating a healthy diet - you need to stay on top of things. Ask friends and family for help and involve your baby's father, even if you do not live with him. If you are worried about getting rid of your baby weight you could start by taking some gentle exercise and aim to give yourself a year to get back into shape. The best way to lose weight after having a baby is to follow a balanced diet and take regular exercise.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



# Safety in the home

## Making your home safe

Most accidents happen in the home, which is why it is important to ensure that your home is safe for young children.

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away.
- Certain rooms such as the kitchen should remain out of bounds or made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?
- Do not leave windows open and make sure you have safety locks fitted to them.
- Keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets and use plug guards.
- Small children should never be left alone with pets
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children.
- Do not smoke, or let anyone else smoke around your child.
- Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for their age.



### Stop

Don't keep dangerous items like medicines and household chemicals within reach of children.



### Think

Look around the house for potential dangers that, if not removed, could harm your child.



### Do

List these dangers and remove them to safety or protect your child from them by using safety devices.



## Support worker says

Babies and toddlers learn about their world by exploring it. This means that, as soon as they are able to, they will crawl, touch and grab at whatever is in their line of vision. They are curious by nature and need careful and gentle guidance from a young age about what danger is and what to stay away from. Shouting at or smacking children will not teach them about safety.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Smoking at home can lead to health problems. This is called passive smoking and it means you are forcing your child to breathe in your smoke. Even if you smoke outside it can still damage their health. Now you are responsible for your child why not give up smoking? Visit <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> for more information.

# Healthy lifestyles

## Start healthy habits early in life

With healthy habits from birth, you can give your baby a good start for a healthy and happy future. Breast milk is ideal for your baby's growing needs and giving them breast milk can make a big difference. If you are not as healthy as you could be, now could be a great time to establish good healthy habits for all the family.

Babies like the foods they get used to. If you give them lots of different, healthy foods to try when they are babies and toddlers, they are more likely to eat a variety of healthy foods as they grow up.

As they grow, you can help them by playing with them and helping them make new movements and explore their surroundings. As they develop, encourage them to take up a new sport or activity. The whole family can enjoy a healthy lifestyle together, even simple things like hiking or cycling help our health and allow us time together to relax and get fit.



### Stop

Do you have a weight problem?  
Do you drink too much alcohol, take drugs or smoke?



### Think

You may be passing these habits onto your child. Now is the time to get healthy together.



### Do

Get help if you need it from NHS websites or speak to your doctor.



## Doctor says

Here are some basic rules to help you lead a more healthy lifestyle:

- Your good health habits will become your child's good health habits.
- Exercise together.
- Eat well.
- Drink alcohol with caution. Know the limits.
- Do not smoke or take drugs. If you do, get help to give up.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



# Crying & temper tantrums

## Managing behaviour

Tantrums may start around 18 months and become less common at four. However, tantrums may later be replaced by mood swings once your child reaches puberty. It's not all bad news, it's just part of growing up and will pass.

Toddler tantrums often happen when a child is not able to express themselves as much as they want to and their frustration may come out as a tantrum. Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable. They often happen in busy, public places, which can be highly embarrassing and add to the parents' stress.

Mood swings during puberty normally pass with growing age and confidence, but can often be difficult to live with at the time. Hormones and changes in physical appearance are often to blame and they may go from being happy one minute to angry and depressed the next.

### Mood swings

It's true that teenagers are especially prone to mood swings. This is often put down to the surge of hormones produced at the start of and during puberty, but there might be other reasons too. Their appearance is changing so they may feel more self-conscious than usual, be feeling under pressure at school or worrying about friendships. Therefore it can be perfectly normal to feel happy one minute, and depressed, angry or frustrated the next. Mood swings usually stabilise as they head towards their late teenage years, but if you are worried contact your Doctor.



### Toddler tantrums

Keep calm and consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting their attention. Don't give in, but do try to understand your child's feelings. Praise your child for calming down afterwards.



### Stop

My ten year old has become moody, rude and seems depressed.



### Think

They are probably going through the onset of puberty.



### Do

Talk to them about how they feel. Help them understand the changes their body is going through.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



You can never overestimate the effect that a dad can have on their children's lives. Therefore, it is important to get involved, as much as possible, as you can have a huge effect on your child. If you are worried or have any concerns then try talking to other fathers about their experiences.

# Dads matter

## An important part of your child's life

Becoming a dad is a fantastic experience, and one that will change your life. However, with it will come lots of questions, and you may find yourself having worries or concerns about becoming a father. You may find that it helps to talk to other fathers about their experiences, as most of them will have asked themselves the same questions.

Fathers play a significant role in the lives of their children, and this is often underestimated. Research shows that children who have a positive relationship with their dads are more likely to do better at school, be more confident, and develop better adult relationships.

Children need to feel that they have unconditional love from both of their parents, and that whatever happens in life their parents will always be there for them. Therefore, try and develop a caring and loving environment for your child and get involved with their schoolwork and their extra curricular activities.

**Stop**  
✘ Are there warning signs that your relationship with your child is suffering?

**Think**  
? Children, who have a positive relationship with their dads, are more likely to succeed at school.

**Do**  
✓ Listen and talk to your child, and try to be involved in their lives as much as possible.



### Tips

Dads can often be forgotten, but it is important to remember that both parents are just as important as each other. Parents need to work together and keep to the same rules. This applies when disciplining your child, and it is also important that you do not take sides in an argument. You should also never argue with your child's mother in front of your child, and if your are separated, its important to get on well together.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Life is often so busy that many parents don't have time to sit down and spend time playing with their child. Play is important because it helps your child feel good about themselves. Having fun with your child is as important as them having their own friends.

# Managing behaviour

## Positive parenting

Every day, your child learns new things. It's what makes childhood such an exciting time. Your child will learn from you and your example.

As a parent, you have an important job in teaching them about your values and beliefs. Start this now and you'll see all your hard work pay off in the future.

Childhood is a good time to teach them good behaviour because they respect and want to be close to you. Using positive feedback is a great idea. Give lots of praise to build up your child's self-esteem by talking about their strengths and not their weaknesses. Your opinion of your child has a huge impact on what they think of themselves, so being too critical can damage confidence.

When your child does something good, praise them and explain why. Rather than saying "Good girl" when they put their toys away, say "You're a good girl for putting your toys away and helping me." This way your child will learn the value of good behaviour.



### Stop

Is your child's self-esteem low? If so, their confidence has somehow been damaged.



### Think

Children want approval so childhood is a good time to teach them positive behaviour



### Do

Praise your child when they're good and when they have done something difficult.



You can use positive feedback when your child is misbehaving too. Make it clear that you're upset about their behaviour, not them. For example, instead of saying "You're a very naughty child" if they do something wrong, try saying "That was a very naughty thing to do". That way, your child won't see themselves as a bad person and will know they have the power to change their behaviour.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



# Starting school

## Change and transition

For children, any kind of change or transition can be scary. Start thinking about your child's early learning place well in advance and research their new nursery or school. It can be a difficult time for parents too.

**Nursery school.** Being in a large group of children, sometimes for the first time can be a frightening experience. Try going to a Parent and Toddler Group, or attend other activities where other small children are around so they get used to mixing. Be patient if they become clingy and take it slowly.

**Starting school.** This is a big change in your child's life. Try to prepare them for what will happen and encourage their independence. Visit the school. Talk to their Teacher and share information about your child that may help.

**Secondary school.** Your child was used to being one of the oldest and now they may be one of the youngest. This can be a difficult time. Make sure your child knows they can tell you about any problems, especially bullying. Exam times can be stressful so be patient and supportive.



### Stop

You are feeling anxious about your child starting school.



### Think

Do not let your child know how you feel, be strong for them.



### Do

Be positive about the exciting change. Talk to your child and reassure them about what's happening.



### Tips

- Give your child lots of support and make sure they know what to expect.
- They may feel nervous and say they feel too ill to go to school. They may also be angry towards you or cry - this is all quite normal.
- You might worry how your child is going to cope with being in a new environment, have confidence in them and be strong for them.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



It is easy to confuse being a parent with being a friend. Sometimes you may need to stand back and take control even if they don't like it. You are the parent.

# Friendships & peer pressure

## The meaning of friendship

Friendships are very important to young people. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to deal with people and develop their own identity. This helps them learn about the values and ideas of others.

Fitting in with a group and sharing secrets is very important. Children may be interested in image, friends and relationships.

Belonging to a group is very important to young people and they may be part of a group because their friends are, even if they don't really like what everyone else does.

Many young people feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because they don't want to stand out from the crowd. On a more serious level, this might mean staying away from school, trying alcohol or drugs, becoming involved in crime or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to.

**Stop**  
✘ Is your child unusually quiet or unhappy? Are they getting into trouble?

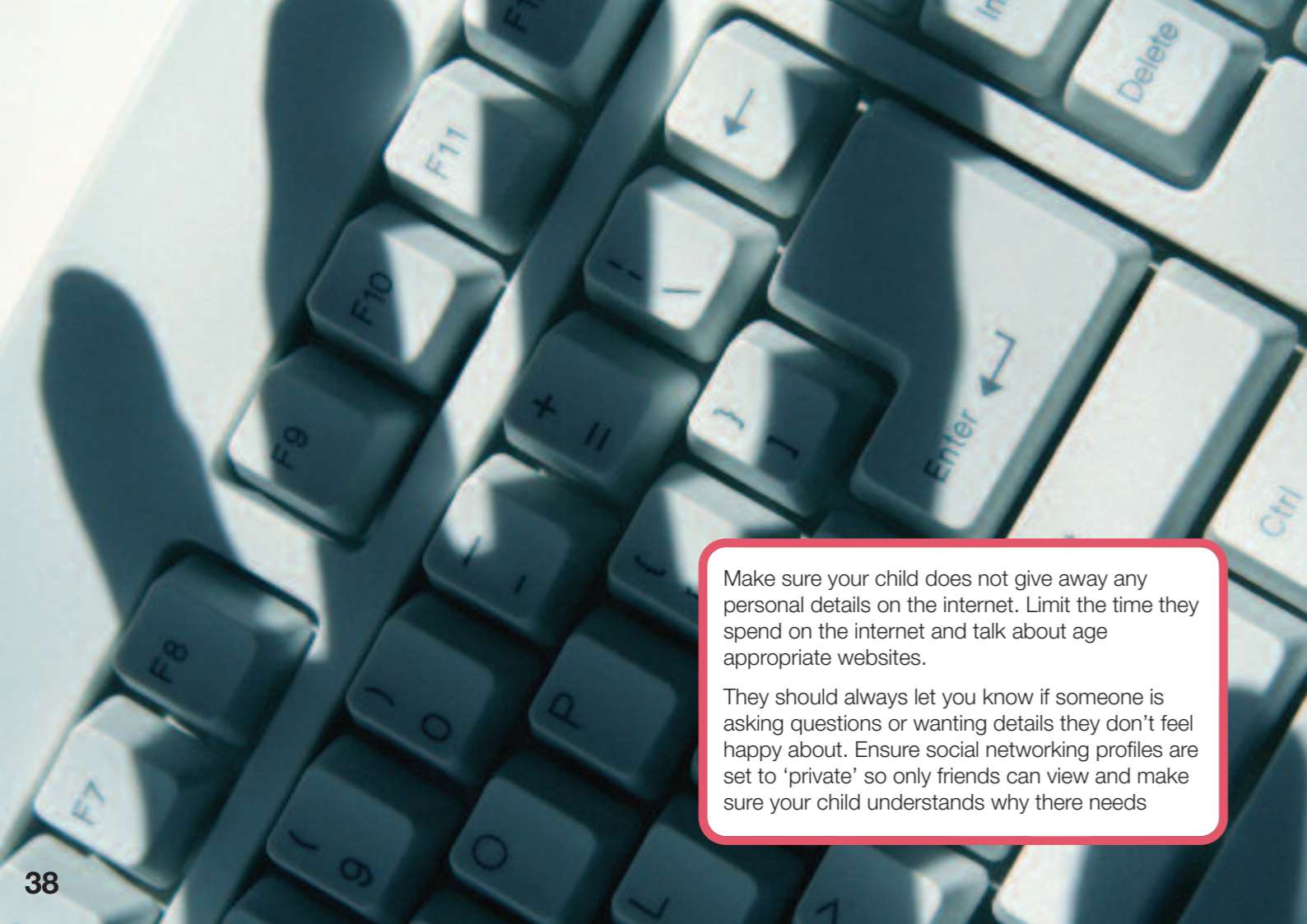
**Think**  
? Most young people like to look the same as everyone else and be part of the crowd

**Do**  
✓ Find out if your child is having any problems at school or with friends. Ask if there is anything you can do to help.



Problems or friendship break-ups are very important to them. Let them know that you are there for them, and that you can help. You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, which will build up an emotional strength that will help them in later life.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Make sure your child does not give away any personal details on the internet. Limit the time they spend on the internet and talk about age appropriate websites.

They should always let you know if someone is asking questions or wanting details they don't feel happy about. Ensure social networking profiles are set to 'private' so only friends can view and make sure your child understands why there needs

# E-safety & bullying

## Children have the right not to be hurt

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child. It can take many forms, from cyberbullying or verbal abuse to physical attack.

The internet is part of life nowadays. It opens up many educational and social opportunities, giving access to a world of information and experiences. Whether on a computer at school or at home, a games console or mobile phone, children are accessing the internet Whenever they can and wherever they are.

Make sure you take notice of your child's activities and know what they are up to. Chatrooms can be used by paedophiles to meet children and often the child thinks they are the same age. They can also 'groom' children to become victims, either psychologically on the internet itself, or by arranging to actually meet with them, gain their trust and abuse them.



### Stop

Your child's behaviour may seem different and they may have unexplainable injuries.



### Think

Does your child seem secretive?



### Do

Keep the computer in a family room and monitor what your child is doing.



Bullying is a frightening experience. It can isolate and damage self-confidence. Bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What other children think is very important to your child and fitting in is a must. Those thought of as different for any reason may be picked on and bullied. Be aware of the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### Girls

Puberty in girls can begin from around the age of nine. Your daughter will probably have gone through puberty and has developed into a young woman. She will need your support and trust but she will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.

# Puberty & growing up

## Changing times

Growing up can be a challenging time for all and a bit of love and understanding can go a long way. Let them know you are there to support them. Sometimes it can come as a bit of a shock when your child starts to develop and change into a young adult and it can be difficult to 'let go'. Of course, you are still their parent and they still need you. Be there to support them.

Discussing matters such as friendships, relationships and love are important. Be open-minded and do not judge them, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help and support.

Friendships are very important to young people. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to deal with people and develop their own identity.

You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, building up an emotional strength that will help them as they get older.



### Stop

He keeps asking me awkward questions about sex, I am not sure what to say.



### Think

The more they understand about growing up, the less daunting it will seem.



### Do

Find out, maybe you could go online. Don't be embarrassed, let them know they can ask you anything.



### Boys

Boy's bodies can start to change from around the age of ten with sexual development soon after. Your son will be developing into a young man. He will need your support and trust but he will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



### Tell-tale signs

Signs to look out for are:

- Appearing panicky or tense.
- Being drowsy and lacking concentration.
- Complaining of sickness.
- Strange eating patterns.
- Has no energy.
- Seem depressed.
- Has skin problems or spots.
- Is aggressive.
- Unable to sleep.
- Seem secretive.

Not all of the signs above mean your child is taking drugs. Look out for changes in their behaviour and relationships.

# Drugs, substance & alcohol misuse



## Look out for the signs

There are many reasons why young people may start to drink or use drugs. They want to show they are growing up and see it as a sign of maturity. They may also feel under pressure from friends to experiment. It is also seen as a means of escape and having fun.

There are many tell-tale signs that your child may be using drugs or alcohol, take a look at the box on the left. There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, how they act or a change in performance at school.

Other signs can involve changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing' and being sold.

It is important to discuss drugs and alcohol early with your child. Some parents worry that doing this may encourage their child to use drugs but avoiding talking about drugs will not protect them.

### Stop



Your child's behaviour seems to have changed completely.

### Think



Could they be using drugs or drinking alcohol?

### Do



Don't jump to conclusions, find out the facts. If your child needs help get it now.

### The facts

- If you or someone at home uses drugs or alcohol you are seriously affecting the care and well-being of your children.
- Children of users are more likely to become addicts.
- Most children will be aware of drugs and alcohol before they leave primary school.
- Children will be more responsive to being told about the risks.
- Provide good information about the dangers. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.

# Useful contacts

## National contacts

- **Alateen Al-Anon (for young people)**  
020 7403 0888  
[www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)
- **Change4Life**  
[www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)
- **Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline**  
0844 477 9400  
[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)
- **DadTalk**  
[www.dadtak.co.uk](http://www.dadtak.co.uk)
- **Directgov**  
[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
- **Family Lives**  
0808 800 2222  
<http://familylives.org.uk>
- **FRANK (24hrs)**  
0800 77 66 00 [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)
- **Kidscape**  
08451 205 204  
[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline**  
0808 2000 247  
[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
<http://refuge.org.uk>
- **Netmums**  
[www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)
- **NSPCC**  
0808 800 5000  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- **The Samaritans**  
08457 90 90 90  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## Local contacts

- **Families Information Service**  
0800 035 0335  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/childcare)  
(local information about services for children and families)

If you are concerned about a child or young person:

- **Children's Referral and Assessment Team**  
01908 253169 or 253170
- **Out of Hours Duty Social Worker**  
01908 265545
- **Common Assessment Framework**  
01908 252016
- **Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children Board**  
01908 254373

- **Adult Continuing Education**  
01908 378927  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/adulteducation](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/adulteducation)  
(for current courses)
- **Compass**  
01908 379673  
[www.compass-uk.org](http://www.compass-uk.org)  
(service for young people with substance misuse problems)
- **Milton Keynes City Counselling Centre**  
01908 231131  
[www.citycounsellingcentre.org.uk](http://www.citycounsellingcentre.org.uk)
- **Milton Keynes Council**  
01908 691691  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk)  
(for general enquiries and information about services in Milton Keynes)

- **Milton Keynes Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health**  
01908 607501  
(support for families concerned about the mental health of a child or young person)
- **MKACT**  
0844 375 4307  
(confidential advice and support for domestic abuse)
- **MK Walk-in Centre (if you can't see your doctor)**  
Hospital Campus, Standing Way, Eaglestone, Milton Keynes MK6 5NG.  
01908 303030
- **Parent Partnership**  
01908 254518  
(Advice for parents of children with SEN)

- **Relate Milton Keynes**  
01908 310010  
(Relationship support for individuals, couples and families)
- **School Admissions Team**  
01908 69169  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools)
- **Thames Valley Police**  
0845 8 505 505 (non-emergency number)

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this handbook up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies will not occur. We will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.

